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# **SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES**

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# Swords and Ploughshares

by John Drinkwater.

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**TO**  
**EDWARD MARSH**



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# Swords and Ploughshares

## THE CARVER IN STONE

HE was a man with wide and patient eyes,  
Grey, like the drift of twitch-fires blown in June,  
That, without fearing, searched if any wrong  
Might threaten from your heart. Grey eyes he  
had

Under a brow was drawn because he knew  
So many seasons to so many pass  
Of upright service, loyal, unabased  
Before the world seducing, and so, barren  
Of good words praising and thought that mated  
his.

He carved in stone. Out of his quiet life  
He watched as any faithful seaman charged  
With tidings of the myriad faring sea,  
And thoughts and premonitions through his  
mind

Sailing as ships from strange and storied lands  
His hungry spirit held, till all they were  
Found living witness in the chiselled stone.  
Slowly out of the dark confusion, spread  
By life's innumerable venturings

Over his brain, he would triumph into the light  
Of one clear mood, unblemished of the blind  
Legions of errant thought that cried about  
His rapt seclusion : as a pearl unsoiled,  
Nay, rather washed to lonelier chastity,  
In gritty mud. And then would come a bird,  
A flower, or the wind moving upon a flower,  
A beast at pasture, or a clustered fruit,  
A peasant face as were the saints of old,  
The leer of custom, or the bow of the moon  
Swung in miraculous poise—some stray from the  
world

Of things created by the eternal mind  
In joy articulate. And his perfect mood  
Would dwell about the token of God's mood,  
Until in bird or flower or moving wind  
Or flock or shepherd or the troops of heaven  
It sprang in one fierce moment of desire  
To visible form.  
Then would his chisel work among the stone,  
Persuading it of petal or of limb  
Or starry curve, till risen anew there sang  
Shape out of chaos, and again the vision  
Of one mind single from the world was pressed  
Upon the daily custom of the sky  
Or field or the body of man.

His people  
Had many gods for worship. The tiger-god,  
The owl, the dewlapped bull, the running pard,  
The camel and the lizard of the slime,

The ram with quivering fleece and fluted horn,  
The crested eagle and the doming bat  
Were sacred. And the king and his high priests  
Decreed a temple, wide on columns huge,  
Should top the cornlands to the sky's far line.  
They bade the carvers carve along the walls  
Images of their gods, each one to carve  
As he desired, his choice to name his god. . . .  
And many came ; and he among them, glad  
Of three leagues' travel through the singing air  
Of dawn among the boughs yet bare of green,  
The eager flight of the spring leading his blood  
Into swift lofty channels of the air,  
Proud as an eagle riding to the sun. . . .  
An eagle, clean of pinion—there's his choice.

Daylong they worked under the growing roof,  
One at his leopard, one the staring ram,  
And he winning his eagle from the stone,  
Until each man had carved one image out,  
Arow beyond the portal of the house.  
They stood arow, the company of gods,  
Camel and bat, lizard and bull and ram,  
The pard and owl, dead figures on the wall,  
Figures of habit driven on the stone  
By chisels governed by no heat of the brain  
But drudges of hands that moved by easy rule.  
Proudly recorded mood was none, no thought  
Plucked from the dark battalions of the mind  
And throned in everlasting sight. But one  
God of them all was witness of belief

And large adventure dared. His eagle spread  
Wide pinions on a cloudless ground of heaven,  
Glad with the heart's high courage of that dawn  
Moving upon the ploughlands newly sown,  
Dead stone the rest. He looked, and knew  
it so.

Then came the king with priests and counsellors  
And many chosen of the people, wise  
With words weary of custom, and eyes askew  
That watched their neighbour face for any news  
Of the best way of judgment, till, each sure  
None would determine with authority,  
All spoke in prudent praise. One liked the owl  
Because an owl blinked on the beam of his barn.  
One, hoarse with crying gospels in the street,  
Praised most the ram, because the common folk  
Wore breeches made of ram's wool. One  
declared

The tiger pleased him best,—the man who  
carved

The tiger-god was halt out of the womb—  
A man to praise, being so pitiful.  
And one, whose eyes dwelt in a distant void,  
With spell and omen pat upon his lips,  
And a purse for any crystal prophet ripe,  
A zealot of the mist, gazed at the bull—  
A lean ill-shapen bull of meagre lines  
That scarce the steel had graved upon the  
stone—

Saying that here was very mystery



And truth, did men but know. And one there  
was

Who praised his eagle, but remembering  
The lither pinion of the swift, the curve  
That liked him better of the mirrored swan.  
And they who carved the tiger-god and ram,  
The camel and the pard, the owl and bull,  
And lizard, listened greedily, and made  
Humble denial of their worthiness,  
And when the king his royal judgment gave  
That all had fashioned well, and bade that each  
Re-shape his chosen god along the walls  
Till all the temple boasted of their skill,  
They bowed themselves in token that as this  
Never had carvers been so fortunate.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes  
Made no denial, neither bowed his head.  
Already while they spoke his thought had gone  
Far from his eagle, leaving it for a sign  
Loyally wrought of one deep breath of life,  
And played about the image of a toad  
That crawled among his ivy leaves. A queer  
'Puff-bellied toad, with eyes that always stared  
Sidelong at heaven and saw no heaven there,  
Weak-hammed, and with a throttle somehow  
twisted

Beyond full wholesome draughts of air, and skin  
Of wrinkled lips, the only zest or will  
The little flashing tongue searching the leaves.  
And king and priest, chosen and counsellor,

Babbling out of their thin and jealous brains,  
Seemed strangely one ; a queer enormous toad  
Panting under giant leaves of dark,  
Sunk in the loins, peering into the day.  
Their judgment wry he counted not for wrong  
More than the fabled poison of the toad  
Striking at simple wits ; how should their  
thought

Or word in praise or blame come near the peace  
That shone in seasonable hours above  
The patience of his spirit's husbandry ?  
They foolish and not seeing, how should he  
Spend anger there or fear—great ceremonies  
Equal for none save great antagonists ?  
The grave indifference of his heart before them  
Was moved by laughter innocent of hate,  
Chastising clean of spite, that moulded them  
Into the antic likeness of his toad  
Bidding for laughter underneath the leaves.

He bowed not, nor disputed, but he saw  
Those ill-created joyless gods, and loathed,  
And saw them creeping, creeping round the walls,  
Death breeding death, wile witnessing to wile,  
And sickened at the dull iniquity  
Should be rewarded, and for ever breathe  
Contagion on the folk gathered in prayer.  
His truth should not be doomed to march among  
This falsehood to the ages. He was called,  
And he must labour there, if so the king  
Would grant it, where the pillars bore the roof

A galleried way of meditation nursed  
Secluded time, with wall of ready stone  
In panels for the carver set between  
The windows—there his chisel should be set,—  
It was his plea. And the king spoke of him,  
Scorning, as one lack-fettle, among all these  
Eager to take the riches of renown ;  
One fearful of the light or knowing nothing  
Of light's dimension, a witling who would throw  
Honour aside and praise spoken aloud  
All men of heart should covet. Let him go  
Grubbing out of the sight of these who knew  
The worth of substance ; there was his proper  
trade.

A squat and curious toad indeed. . . . The eyes,  
Patient and grey, were dumb as were the lips,  
That, fixed and governed, hoarded from them all  
The larger laughter lifting in his heart.  
Straightway about his gallery he moved,  
Measured the windows and the virgin stone,  
Till all was weighed and patterned in his brain.  
Then first where most the shadow struck the wall,  
Under the sills, and centre of the base,  
From floor to sill out of the stone was wooed  
Memorial folly, as from the chisel leapt  
His chastening laughter searching priest and  
king—

A huge and wrinkled toad, with legs asplay,  
And belly loaded, leering with great eyes  
Busily fixed upon the void.

All days

His chisel was the first to ring across  
The temple's quiet ; and at fall of dusk  
Passing among the carvers homeward, they  
Would speak of him as mad, or weak against  
The challenge of the world, and let him go  
Lonely, as was his will, under the night  
Of stars or cloud or summer's folded sun,  
Through crop and wood and pastureland to sleep.  
None took the narrow stair as wondering  
How did his chisel prosper in the stone,  
Unvisited his labour and forgot.  
And times when he would lean out of his height  
And watch the gods growing along the walls,  
The row of carvers in their linen coats  
Took in his vision a virtue that alone  
Carving they had not nor the thing they carved.  
Knowing the health that flowed about his close  
Imagining, the daily quiet won  
From process of his clean and supple craft,  
Those carvers there, far on the floor below,  
Would haply be transfigured in his thought  
Into a gallant company of men  
Glad of the strict and loyal reckoning  
That proved in the just presence of the brain  
Each chisel-stroke. How surely would he  
prosper  
In pleasant talk at easy hours with men  
So fashioned if it might be—and his eyes  
Would pass again to those dead gods that grew  
In spreading evil round the temple walls ;

And, one dead pressure made, the carvers moved  
Along the wall to mould and mould again  
The self-same god, their chisels on the stone  
Tapping in dull precision as before,  
And he would turn, back to his lonely truth.

He carved apace. And first his people's gods,  
About the toad, out of their sterile time,  
Under his hand thrilled and were recreate.  
The bull, the pard, the camel and the ram,  
Tiger and owl and bat—all were the signs  
Visibly made body on the stone  
Of sightless thought adventuring the host  
That is mere spirit, these the bloom achieved  
By secret labour in the flowing wood  
Of rain and air and wind and continent sun. . . .  
His tiger, lithe, immobile in the stone,  
A swift destruction for a moment leashed,  
Sprang crying from the jealous stealth of men  
Opposed in cunning watch, with engines hid  
Of torment and calamitous desire.  
His leopard, swift on lean and paltry limbs,  
Was fear in flight before accusing faith.  
His bull, with eyes that often in the dusk  
Would lift from the sweet meadow grass to  
watch  
Him homeward passing, bore on massy beam  
The burden of the patient of the earth.  
His camel bore the burden of the damned,  
Being gaunt, with eyes aslant along the nose.  
He had a friend, who hammered bronze and iron

And cupped the moonstone on a silver ring,  
One constant like himself, would come at night  
Or bid him as a guest, when they would make  
Their poets touch a starrier height, or search  
Together with unparsimonious mind  
The crowded harbours of mortality.  
And there were jests, wholesome as harvest ale  
Of homely habit, bred of hearts that dared  
Judgment of laughter under the eternal eye :  
This frolic wisdom was his carven owl.  
His ram was lordship on the lonely hills,  
Alert and fleet, content only to know  
The wind mightily pouring on his fleece,  
With yesterday and all unrisen suns  
Poorer than disinherited ghosts. His bat  
Was ancient envy made a mockery,  
Cowering below the newer eagle carved  
Above the arches with wide pinion spread,  
His faith's dominion of that happy dawn.

And so he wrought the gods upon the wall,  
Living and crying out of his desire,  
Out of his patient incorruptible thought,  
Wrought them in joy was wages to his faith.,  
And other than the gods he made. The stalks  
Of bluebells heavy with the news of spring,  
The vine loaded with plenty of the year,  
And swallows, merely tenderness of thought  
Bidding the stone to small and fragile flight ;  
Leaves, the thin relics of autumnal boughs,  
Or massed in June. . . .

All from their native pressure bloomed and  
    sprang  
Under his shaping hand into a proud  
And governed image of the central man,—  
Their moulding, charts of all his travelling.  
And all were deftly ordered, duly set  
Between the windows, underneath the sills,  
And roofward, as a motion rightly planned,  
Till on the wall, out of the sullen stone,  
A glory blazed, his vision manifest,  
His wonder captive. And he was content.

And when the builders and the carvers knew  
Their labour done, and high the temple stood  
Over the cornlands, king and counsellor  
And priest and chosen of the people came  
Among a ceremonial multitude  
To dedication. And, below the thrones  
Where king and archpriest ruled above the  
    throng,  
Highest among the ranked artificers  
The carvers stood. And when, the temple  
    vowed  
To holy use, tribute and choral praise  
Given as was ordained, the king looked down  
Upon the gathered folk, and bade them see  
The comely gods fashioned about the walls,  
And keep in honour men whose precious skill  
Could so adorn the sessions of their worship,  
Gravely the carvers bowed them to the  
    ground.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes  
Stood not among them ; nor did any come  
To count his labour, where he watched alone  
Above the coloured throng. He heard, and  
looked  
Again upon his work, and knew it good,  
Smiled on his toad, passed down the stair unseen  
And sang across the teeming meadows home.



## A TOWN WINDOW

BEYOND my window in the night  
Is but a drab inglorious street,  
Yet there the frost and clean starlight  
As over Warwick woods are sweet.

Under the grey drift of the town  
The crocus works among the mould  
As eagerly as those that crown  
The Warwick spring in flame and gold.

And when the tramway down the hill  
Across the cobbles moans and rings,  
There is about my window-sill  
The tumult of a thousand wings.

## THE NEW MIRACLE

OF old men wrought strange gods for mystery,  
    Implored miraculous tokens in the skies,  
And lips that most were strange in prophecy  
    Were most accounted wise.

The hearthstone's commerce between mate and  
    mate,  
    Barren of wonder, prospered in content,  
And still the hunger of their thought was great  
    For sweet astonishment.

And so they built them altars of retreat  
    Where life's familiar use was overthrown,  
And left the shining world about their feet,  
    To travel worlds unknown.

. . . . .  
We hunger still. But wonder has come down  
    From alien skies upon the midst of us ;  
The sparkling hedgerow and the clamorous town  
    Have grown miraculous.

And man from his far travelling returns  
    To find yet stranger wisdom than he sought,  
Where in the habit of his threshold burns  
    Unfathomable thought.

## MEMORY

ONE told me in the stress of days  
Of ease that memory should bring,  
And so I feared my trodden ways  
For snares against my labouring.

Lest I should spend my brain amiss  
In wrath for bitterness gone by,  
Or amorous for some old kiss,  
I would not deal with memory.

Because one said—"In memory  
Is half the health of your estate,"  
I smote the dead years under me,  
I smote and cast them from my gate.

## THE BOUNDARIES

ALTHOUGH beyond the track of unseen stars  
Imagination strove in weariless might,  
Yet loomed at last inviolable bars  
That bound my farthest flight.

And when some plain old carol in the street  
Quickened a shining angel in my brain,  
I knew that even his passionate wings should beat  
Upon those bars in vain.

And then I asked if God omnipotent  
Himself was caught within the snare, or free,  
And would the bars at his command relent,—  
And none could answer me.

## LAST CONFESSIONAL

FOR all ill words that I have spoken,  
For all clear moods that I have broken,  
For all despite and hasty breath,  
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

Death, master of the great assize,  
Love, falling now to memories,  
You two alone I need to prove,  
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For every tenderness undone,  
For pride when holiness was none  
But only easy charity,  
O Death, be pardoner to me.

For stubborn thought that would not make  
Measure of love's thought for love's sake,  
But kept a sullen difference,  
Take, Love, this laggard penitence.

For cloudy words too vainly spent  
To prosper but in argument,  
When truth stood lonely at the gate,  
On your compassion, Death, I wait.

For all the beauty that escaped  
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,  
For wonder that was slow to move,  
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,  
For life defeated of its dues,  
This latest word of all my breath—  
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

## FOR CORIN TO-DAY

OLD shepherd in your wattle cote,  
I think a thousand years are done  
Since first you took your pipe of oat  
And piped against the risen sun,  
Until his burning lips of gold  
Sucked up the drifting scarves of dew  
And bade you count your flocks from fold  
And set your hurdle stakes anew.

And then as now at noon you'd take  
The shadow of delightful trees,  
And with good hands of labour break  
Your barley bread with dairy cheese,  
And with some lusty shepherd mate  
Would wind a simple argument,  
And bear at night beyond your gate  
A loaded wallet of content.

O Corin of the grizzled eye,  
A thousand years upon your down  
You've seen the ploughing teams go by  
Above the bells of Avon's town ,  
And while there's any wind to blow  
Through frozen February nights,  
About your lambing pens will go  
The glimmer of your lanthorn lights.

## MAD TOM TATTERMAN

“ OLD man, grey man, good man scavenger,  
Bearing is it eighty years upon your crumpled  
back ?

What is it you gather in the frosty weather,  
Is there any treasure here to carry in your  
sack ? ”

. . . . .

“ I’ve a million acres and a thousand head of  
cattle,  
And a foaming river where the silver salmon  
leap ,  
But I’ve left fat valleys to dig in sullen alleys  
Just because a twisted star rode by me in my  
sleep.

“ I’ve a brain is dancing to an old forgotten  
music  
Heard when all the world was just a crazy  
flight of dreams,  
And don’t you know I scatter in the dirt along  
the gutter  
Seeds that little ladies nursed by Babylonian  
streams ?

“ Mad Tom Tatterman, that is how they call  
me.  
Oh, they know so much, so much, all so neatly  
dressed ;



I've a tale to tell you—come and listen, will  
you?—

One as ragged as the twigs that make a mag-  
pie's nest.

“ Ragged, oh, but very wise. You and this and  
that man,

All of you are making things that none of you  
would lack,

And so your eyes grow dusty, and so your limbs  
grow rusty—

But mad Tom Tatterman puts nothing in his  
sack.

“ Nothing in my sack, sirs, but the Sea of Galilee  
Was walked for mad Tom Tatterman, and  
when I go to sleep

They'll know that I have driven through the  
acres of broad heaven

Flocks are whiter than the flocks that all your  
shepherds keep.”

## MAMBLE

I NEVER went to Mamble  
That lies above the Teme,  
So I wonder who's in Mamble,  
And whether people seem  
Who breed and brew along there  
As lazy as the name,  
And whether any song there  
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,  
And that is all I know  
Of the narrow road to Mamble,  
And should I turn and go  
To that place of lazy token  
That lies above the Teme,  
There might be a Mamble broken  
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble  
And take another road  
To as good a place as Mamble  
Be it lazy as a toad ;  
Who travels Worcester county  
Takes any place that comes  
When April tosses bounty  
To the cherries and the plums.

## LOVE'S CHALLENGE

WHEN days are words, and all is done,  
And we together lie alone  
In our last city, and the sun  
Can no more serve us than a stone—

If then the riches that are signed  
In shapes of perishable earth  
Should know denial, and the mind  
That counted them be nothing worth,

If love that orders patiently  
Upon the lover's brain the one  
True stature of the loved should be  
Less than the dust when all is done,

Should love be forfeit, but a sound  
Of days outlasted by a rhyme,—  
Then would eternity be found  
Apostate in the court of time.

## THE POET TO HIS MISTRESS

If I should take  
Less thought of gentleness  
For your dear sake  
Than for the poignant labours that possess  
My blood, then surely by so much were signed  
My shame and loss in the world's recording mind.

If you should be  
Jealous of my desire,  
And, loving me,  
Rebuke my patient hopes from your sweet fire,  
Then would you take a lover to your bed  
Abased with the pale submission of the dead.

## LOVE'S HOUSE

### I

I KNOW not how these men or those may take  
Their first glad measure of love's character,  
Or whether one should let the summer make  
Love's festival, and one the falling year.

I only know that in my prime of days  
When my young branches came to blossoming,  
You were the sign that loosed my lips in praise,  
You were the zeal that governed all my spring.

### II

In prudent counsel many gathered near,  
Forewarning us of deft and secret snares  
That are love's use. We heard them as we hear  
The ticking of a clock upon the stairs.

The troops of reason, careful to persuade,  
Blackened love's name, but love was more  
than these,  
For we had wills to venture unafraid  
The trouble of unnavigable seas.

### III

Their word was but a barren seed that lies  
Undrawn of the sun's health and undesired,  
Because the habit of their hearts was wise,  
Because the wisdom of their tongues was tired.

For in the smother of contentious pride,  
And in the fear of each tumultuous mood,  
Our love has kept serenely fortified  
And unsurped one stedfast solitude.

### IV

Dark words, and hasty humours of the blood  
Have come to us and made no longer stay  
Than footprints of a bird upon the mud  
That in an hour the tide will take away.

But not March weather over ploughlands blown,  
Nor cresses green upon their gravel bed,  
Are beautiful with the clean rigour grown  
Of quiet thought our love has piloted.

v

I sit before the hearths of many men,  
 When speech goes gladly, eager to withhold  
 No word at all, yet when I pass again  
 The last of words is captive and untold.

We talk together in love's house, and there  
 No thought but seeks what counsel you may  
 give,  
 And every secret trouble from its lair  
 Comes to your hand, no longer fugitive.

vi

I woo the world, with burning will to be  
 Delighted in all fortune it may find,  
 And still the strident dogs of jealousy  
 Go mocking down the tunnels of my mind.

Only for you my contemplation goes  
 Clean as a god's, undarkened of pretence,  
 Most happy when your garner overflows,  
 Achieving in your prosperous diligence.

## VII

When from the dusty corners of my brain  
Comes limping some ungainly word or deed,  
I know not if my dearest friend's disdain  
Be durable or brief, spent husk or seed.

But your rebuke and that poor fault of mine  
Go straitly outcast, and we close the door,  
And I, no promise asking and no sign,  
Stand blameless in love's presence as before.

## VIII

A beggar in the ditch, I stand and call  
My questions out upon the queer parade  
Of folk that hurry by, and one and all  
Go down the road with never answer made.

I do not question love. I am a lord  
High at love's table, and the vigilant king,  
Unquestioned, from the hubbub at the board  
Leans down to me and tells me everything.



## OF GREATHAM

(TO THOSE WHO LIVE THERE)

SPENDTHRIFT of ease, importunate of will,  
Daily we bid at learning's mart, and speak  
In speech that is but vanity, for still  
We know not what we seek.

. . . . .  
For peace, than knowledge more desirable  
Into your Sussex quietness I came,  
When summer's green and gold and azure fell  
Over the world in flame.

And peace upon your pasture-lands I found,  
Where grazing flocks drift on continually,  
As little clouds that travel with no sound  
Across a windless sky.

Out of your oaks the birds call to their mates  
That brood among the pines, where hidden  
deep  
From curious eyes a world's adventure waits  
In columned choirs of sleep.

Under the calm ascension of the night  
We heard the mellow lapsing and return  
Of night-owls purring in their groundling flight  
Through lanes of darkling fern.

Unbroken peace when all the stars were drawn  
Back to their lairs of light, and ranked along  
From shire to shire the downs out of the dawn  
Were risen in golden song.

. . . . .  
I sing of peace who have known the large unrest  
Of men bewildered in their travelling,  
And I have known the bridal earth unblest  
By the brigades of spring.

I have known that loss. And now the broken  
thought  
Of nations marketing in death I know,  
The very winds to threnodies are wrought  
That on your downlands blow.

I sing of peace. Was it but yesterday  
I came among your roses and your corn ?  
Then momentarily amid this wrath I pray  
For yesterday reborn.

## WE WILLED IT NOT

WE willed it not. We have not lived in hate,  
Loving too well the shires of England  
thrown  
From sea to sea to covet your estate  
Or wish one flight of fortune from your  
throne.

We had grown proud because the nations stood  
Hoping together against the calumny  
That, tortured of its old barbarian blood,  
Barbarian still the heart of man should be.

Builders there are who name you overlord,  
Building with us the citadels of light,  
Who hold as we this chartered sin abhorred,  
And cry you risen Cæsar of the Night.

Beethoven speaks with Milton on this day,  
And Shakespeare's song with Goethe's beats  
the sky,  
In witness of the birthright you betray,  
In witness of the vision you deny.

We love the hearth, the quiet hills, the song,  
The friendly gossip come from every land,  
And very peace were now a nameless wrong,—  
You thrust this bitter quarrel to our hand.

For this your pride the tragic armies go,  
And the grim navies watch along the seas ;  
You trade in death, you mock at life, you throw  
To God the tumult of your blasphemies.

You rob us of our love-right. It is said.  
In treason to the world you are enthroned ;  
We rise, and, by the yet ungathered dead,  
Not lightly shall the treason be atoned.

## THE CAUSE

WHEN drum and brass make summons in the  
street

And death holds mighty conclave at our  
gate,

How girt against the summons do we meet—

How clean of heart—how holy in estate ?

Knowing, we have not builded as we knew,

Loving, the price of love we have withheld,

The works in witness of our faith are few,

Upon our lips the forthright word is quelled.

We have heard the voice that spake upon the  
Mount

Unwearied of the generations dead,

And in a watch have been content to count

The loaves and leave the word unharvested.

The dust is on our swords, and in our brain

Sad ruinous gospels daily intercede ;

We dream as angels, and the world again

Calls, and the dream goes barren of its deed.

Yet though we have been slow in sacrifice,

In service weak, in purpose unannealed,

Of all our treason still we know the price,

We know the beauty that we have not sealed.

And now, because the apostate captains call,  
A guiltless people takes the pledge of guilt,  
Swearing that in oblivion shall fall  
The altars that our tattered hearts have built.

These lords, brute-blind in sodden passion, wrong  
The promise of a world's regenerate name ;  
Our prophecy has faltered in a song—  
They boast in shameless prophecy of shame.

Wherefore in arms we stand. O Spirit, thou  
Leading our battle terribly shalt ride.  
Our faith was halt, our little faith, but now  
It is thy witness, and unterrified.

We dare the final agony, to set  
The world's will free for far adventuring.  
Now, when the unholy hosts of death are met,  
Life's challenge to the hosts of death we fling.

## ENGLAND TO BELGIUM

Not lusting for a brief renown  
Nor apt in any vain dispute  
You throw the scythes of autumn down,  
And leave your dues of autumn fruit  
Unharvested, and dare the wrong  
Of death's immitigable wing,  
And on your banners burn a song  
That gods unrisen yet shall sing.

Because your Belgian fields are dear,  
And now they suffer black despite,  
Because your womanhood can hear  
The menace on the lips of night,  
Because you are a little clan  
Of brothers, and because there comes  
The thief among you, to a man  
You take the challenge of your drums.

Not all our tears and wrath shall weigh  
The utter bitterness that falls,  
O Belgian hearts, on you this day,  
The sorrow of your broken walls,  
And desolated hearths, the crime  
Of Prussian sword and Prussian flame,  
But, brothers, with the world we chime  
The story of your Belgian name.

For all the beauty that escaped  
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,  
For wonder that was slow to move,  
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,  
For life defeated of its dues,  
This latest word of all my breath—  
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.



## REBUKE

IN soaring stone they prophesied,  
And figured with a brush of gold  
Such peace as bids at eventide  
The happy shepherd from the fold.

The stones are dust, the missal-page  
No more shall make its coloured song. . . .  
They were the souls of men ; the gage  
Is at your feet , you did them wrong.

It shall be answered. Yet they lie  
Broken for ever with the sweet  
Dear bodies crushed spiteously  
As acorns under swinish feet.

Though there be judgment, and the word  
Be strait and bitter on your head,  
Your work is done, your gospel heard,  
You have your dead . . . you have your dead.

Yet, fools and little, still the clear  
Undaunted hearts of Europe go  
Gallant in faith . . . how should they fear ?  
You know them not. How should you  
know ?

## GATHERING SONG

A WORD for you of the Prussian boast,  
Or never a word, but under the drum  
The limber tread of a tramping host  
Out of the English counties come—  
There are men who could count you the  
Warwick spires,  
And fishermen turning from Severn and Ouse ;  
They gather from half a hundred shires,  
And never a man of them all to choose.

They are coming out of the northern dales,  
Out of the sound of Bow they come,  
Lomond calls to the hills of Wales—  
Hear them tramping under the drum :  
From Derry to Cork, from Thames to Dee,  
\* With Kentish Hob and Collier Tyne,  
They come to travel the Dover sea,  
A thousand thousand men of the line.

They come from the bright Canadian snows,  
And Brisbane's one with proud Bengal ;  
Over the Vaal and the Orange goes  
To the cape of the south a single call ;  
Though the term shall be for a year or ten  
You still shall hear it under the drum,  
The limber tread of the marching men :  
They come, you lords of the boast, they come.

## THE DEFENDERS

His wage of rest at nightfall still  
He takes, who sixty years has known  
Of ploughing over Cotsall hill  
And keeping trim the Cotsall stone.

He meditates the dusk, and sees  
Folds of his wonted shepherdings  
And lands of stubble and tall trees  
Becoming insubstantial things.

And does he see on Cotsall hill—  
Thrown even to the central shire—  
The funnelled shapes forbidding still  
The stranger from his cottage fire ?

ON THE PICTURE OF A PRIVATE SOLDIER  
WHO HAD GAINED A VICTORIA  
CROSS

No daemon in that face ; he stands  
Strangely as one of men that build,  
In multitudes, with servile hands,  
The temples that they have not willed.

Yet once he smote the prison walls,  
And strode the hills of chance again,  
And scattered to their burials  
The prudent devils of his brain.

The old monotonies may keep  
Anew the sessions of their power . . .  
His heart shall carry down to sleep  
The spoils of an eternal hour.

## ONE SPEAKS IN GERMANY

" I BID you build a tower,"  
The king said to me,  
" Where I can watch the passing  
Of ships at sea."  
And I built the king a tall tower.

And the king grew cunning,  
And covetous was he  
Of any ship was passing  
Over the sea ;  
A sorry heart, and cunning.

I stand in the shadow  
Of the king's tall tower,  
And a heavy wind is nursing  
An evil hour.  
I am standing in the shadow.

## OF THE DEAD

MASTER and Maker, God of Right,  
The soldier dead are at Thy gate,  
Whose challenge cried against the night,  
Whose laughter dared the slings of hate.

We do not praise, nor shall be spent  
This day in lamentation loud,  
But of this warrior testament  
We are proud, O Lord, nor vainly proud.

For Thee their pilgrim swords were tried,  
Thy flaming word was in their srips,  
They battled, they endured, they died  
To make a new apocalypse.

Master and Maker, God of Right,  
The soldier dead are at Thy gate,  
Who kept the spears of honour bright  
And freedom's house inviolate.

## ECLIPSE

A MAN is dead . . . another dead . . .

God ! can you count the companies  
Of stars across dear heaven spread ?

They are numbered even as these.

Blind brain of the world ! And is the day

Moving about its Christmas bells ?

Poor spinning brain, and wellaway . . .

Christ . . . Christ ? But no man tells.

The thoughts of men are kings. They keep

The crown, the sepulchre, the song.

The thoughts of men are kings. They sleep. . .

The thrones are empty overlong.

So rebel death a million-fold

Of lamentable service takes.

The prophesying heart is cold. . . .

Is cold . . . or breaks.

What now were best ? Some little thing ?

To trim the dock-weed, cleanse the floor,

To die, to grieve on death, to bring

The pitcher to the door ?

Dig deep the grave, hew down the tree,

Shatter the millstones, break the plough.

And was there once a Calvary ?

And thorns upon His brow ?

## NOCTURNE

O ROYAL night, under your stars that keep  
    Their golden troops in charted motion set,  
The living legions are renewed in sleep  
    For bloodier battle yet.

O royal death, under your boundless sky  
    Where unrecorded constellations throng,  
Dispassionate those other legions lie,  
    Invulnerably strong.



## THE SHIPS OF GRIEF

ON seas where every pilot fails  
A thousand thousand ships to-day  
Ride with a moaning in their sails,  
Through winds grey and waters grey.

They are the ships of grief. They go  
As fleets are derelict and driven,  
Estranged from every port they know,  
Scarce asking fortitude of heaven.

No, do not hail them. Let them ride  
Lonely as they would lonely be . . .  
There is an hour will prove the tide,  
There is a sun will strike the sea.

## THE POETS TO THE HEROES

LET us devise a music for to-day,  
Solemn and sweet, worthy of solemn things,  
For death now takes an unfrequented way.  
Careless of age, his black and terrible wings  
Fold upon youth ; the full imaginings  
Of midmost life are but a little clay.

Let sorrow sing the sorry forfeiture  
Of life that sailed upon the central sky  
Full-orbed in glad dominion, and secure  
As life may be beneath mortality ;  
Let sorrow sing · the bitter laurels lie  
On brows fore-darkened of death's signature.

Most heavy toll has death of all the rare  
Bright bounty of the summertide of men,  
The brain of spring is stricken unaware,  
The flowing boughs are hewn. Make music then  
Solemn and sweet, till death shall choose again  
The winter tree and the grey-dusted hair.

Solemn, with notes that are not of the time  
When plough nor scythe nor sickle is afield,  
But chanted as remembering a prime  
Cold in defeat, the rusting of a shield  
Too soon put by, poor lips and vision sealed  
When all the world was yet to see and rhyme.

Solemn, with sound of guns that make salute  
Over a million graves untimely kept,  
Solemn, with sound of tears that may dispute  
No more with grief so long a day unwept,  
Solemn, because the wiser angel slept,  
Solemn, because the golden choirs were mute.

Yet sweet, for every nobleness is sweet,  
Building above all bleak and envious power  
Rigours and fames and chronicles to greet  
The equal stars. And never fairer flower  
Of nobleness was sprung than in this hour  
When youth and death in tragic bridals meet.

Sweet, for the sacrifice that now is made,  
Sweet, for the soul's victorious desire,  
Sweet, for the hope whereof in price is paid  
This ranging fury of destroying fire,  
Sweet for the wings that beat above the pyre  
Of happy men whose faith was unbetrayed.

The stars dispute not, and the primrose makes  
Its bower unbidden underneath the thorn ;  
Nor profits it, when the black angel wakes,  
To rail on death with argument forlorn ;  
Then surely to heroic song was born  
This hour of earth that time so surely breaks

Into your lonely silences you go  
And death is your imperishable deed,  
We bring you honour, and you shall not know,  
We bring you music, and you shall not heed ;  
Yet is our song not measured by your need,  
Being our sorrow's crown and overthrow.

A FEW of these poems have appeared in *New Numbers*, and for permission to reprint others I have to thank the Editors of *The British Review*, *Country Life*, *The Empire Magazine*, *Methuen's Annual*, *The Nation*, *The Observer*, *The Sphere*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and *The Westminster Gazette*.

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